AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Original) A method of predicting whether an individual having hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection will respond to interferon (IFN) treatment; the method comprising;

determining the presence or absence of antibodies reactive with a preS1 (94-117) peptide in a sample obtained from the individual,

the presence of said antibodies in said sample being indicative that said individual will respond to said treatment.

2. (Original) A method according to claim 1 comprising detecting the presence of said antibodies in said sample and thereby determining that the individual will respond to IFN treatment.

3. (Original) A method according to claim 1 comprising detecting the absence of said antibodies in said sample and thereby determining that the individual will not respond to IFN treatment.

4. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~claim 1 wherein the individual has chronic HBV infection.

5. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~claim 1 wherein the individual is HBeAg positive.

6. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of claims 1 to 4~~claim 1 wherein the individual is HBeAg negative.

7. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~claim 1 wherein the antibodies are IgG or IgM antibodies.

8. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~claim 1 wherein the sample is a blood, serum or plasma sample.

9. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~claim 1 comprising;

contacting the sample with a preS1 (94-117) peptide and;

determining binding of said antibodies to said peptide.

10. (Original) A method according to claim 9 wherein the peptide comprises a detectable label.

11. (Original) A method according to claim 9 wherein said peptide is immobilised.

12. (Currently Amended) A method according to ~~any one of claims~~claim ~~9 to 11~~ wherein said binding is detected with a labelled secondary antibody.

13. (Original) A kit for use in predicting whether an individual having hepatitis B will respond to interferon (IFN) treatment, the kit comprising;

a preS1 (94-117) peptide.

14. (Original) A kit according to claim 13 wherein said peptide is immobilised on a solid support.

15. (Original) A kit according to claim 14 wherein the solid support is a microtitre plate.

16. (Currently Amended) A kit according to ~~any one of claims~~claim ~~13 to 15~~ further comprising a labelled secondary antibody which binds to human antibodies.

17. (Currently Amended) A kit according to ~~any one of claims~~claim ~~13-16~~ further comprising regents for detecting the binding of the labelled secondary antibody.

18. (Currently Amended) A kit according to ~~any one of claims~~claim ~~13-17~~ further comprising wash buffers.

19. (Currently Amended) A kit according to ~~any one of claims~~claim 13~~-18~~ further comprising sample-handling containers.

20. (Currently Amended) A method of treating a hepatitis B infection in an individual comprising;

identifying the individual as responsive to interferon (IFN) treatment using a method according to ~~any one of claims~~claim 1~~ to 12~~, and;

administering IFN to said individual.

21. (Original) A method according to claim 20 wherein the IFN is alpha-IFN.

22. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 20~~ or claim 21~~ wherein corticosteroid is administered to the individual.

23. (Currently Amended) A method of predicting whether an individual having hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection will respond to interferon (IFN) treatment which is substantially as described herein~~, with reference to the accompanying table and figures~~.